

THE USE OF GESCHICHTEN BY MAX FRISCH
IN HIS NOVEL, STILIER

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THE USE OF GESCHICHTEN BY MAX FRISCH
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INTRODUCTION

Max Frisch, an acclaimed story-teller, employs his narrative skills most adroitly in his novel Stiller. Published in 1954, Stiller established Frisch's reputation as a serious novelist. Critics see in Stiller Frisch's dramatic treatment of an existential problem.¹ It is how Frisch presents this problem in the case of Anatol Ludwig Stiller that is of particular interest.

The novel is a gripping account of a middle-aged man who is arrested at the border when he attempts to enter Switzerland on a false passport. He is identified as Stiller, a Swiss citizen who had disappeared six years earlier, and he is detained on the suspicion of espionage. Stiller vehemently denies that he is the man whom everyone claims he is, and, in diary form, records his struggle. His struggle is with the Swiss authorities, his family, former friends, and most importantly with himself.

Before investigating the various stories that Stiller tells, it is necessary to understand Frisch's own

¹Cf. H. Bänziger, Frisch and Dürrenmatt (Bern and München, 1962); C. Hoffmann, "The Search for Self, Inner Freedom and Relatedness in the Novels of Max Frisch," The Contemporary Novel in German (Austin-London, 1967), pp. 91-113, among others.

predilection for little stories, sketches, and fragments as literary forms. In his Tagebuch of 1946, Frisch discusses "Der Hang zum Skizzenhaften" and "Die Vorliebe für das Fragment" and further elaborates about the sketch:

Die Skizze hat eine Richtung, aber kein Ende; die Skizze als Ausdruck eines Weltbildes, das sich nicht mehr schliesst oder noch nicht schliesst; als Scheu vor einer förmlichen Ganzheit, die der geistigen voraussetzt und nur Entlehnung sein kann; als Misstrauen gegen eine Fertigkeit, die verhindert, dass unsere Zeit jemals eine eigene Vollendung erreicht.²

Thus it is not surprising that Frisch's novel is composed of many fragments. Marcel Reich-Ranicki maintains that the fragment or fragmentary best reflects and corresponds to Frisch's world-view:

Diese Uneinheitlichkeit des Buches [Stiller] ermöglicht seinen Reichtum und seine Mannigfaltigkeit und bewirkt jenen Gesamteindruck des Skizzenhaften und Fragmentarischen, das unser Weltbild am ehesten auszudrücken vermag.³

He also enumerates the various prose forms contained in Stiller and concludes that it is the "in sich geschlossenen Geschichten . . . die nichts anders sind als parabolische Kommentare zu den behandelten Fragen" (Reich-Ranicki, p. 280).

²Max Frisch, Tagebuch (Frankfurt/Main, 1958), pp. 118-119.

³Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Über den Romaner Max Frisch," Neue Rundschau, LXXIV (1963), p. 279.

Other critics speak similarly about the stories contained in Stiller. Hans Bänziger agrees that the stories must be considered in relation to the theme of the novel as a whole, but he speaks of them rather disparagingly as wild fabrications.⁴ Walter Jens calls the stories variations of the main theme, counterpoints to the main action, thematic vanishing and fixing points, etc. He says:

Und scheint es nicht, als versuche der eingekreiste Stiller, dem man den Schatten von allüberall her reicht, die Jahre vor seinem Aufbruch in die Fremde mit wilden Reden, lästerlich-barocken Erzählungen, zynischen Parabeln und farbenreichen Gleichnissen zu überdecken.⁵

Rather than attempting to cover up his past with his stories, as Jens asserts above, Stiller tells his stories in order to elucidate his past actions as well as his present position. Although it is generally acknowledged that Frisch employs stories to develop the character of Stiller and his actions, it seems that the real significance of the stories in this novel is overlooked. Frisch, himself, best explains the importance of stories.

⁴Frisch und Dürrenmatt, pp. 88-89.

⁵Walter Jens, "Nachwort," Zu Max Frisch, Erzählungen des Anatol Ludwig Stiller (Frankfurt/Main, 1961), p. 57.

Upon various occasions Frisch has endeavored to explain his views about Geschichten.⁶ And, although he is primarily concerned with Geschichte as a story rather than history (i.e., a scientifically systematic account of the past), it is necessary to keep in mind both meanings of the word. History records events as they occurred, while, for Frisch, the story records possibility.

Stories are invented by man and are genuine only as reflections. Reflections of what? According to Frisch they reflect and express the internal reality or truth which one has recognized. This recognition or perception constitutes a person's knowledge or inner experience (Erfahrung), which is not a conclusion from occurrences (Erlebnisse), but rather a notion, a sudden idea, an insight.

Frisch posits the inner experience and then proceeds to show that this inner experience makes up occurrences or events to explain its origin. Most stories are told in the imperfect because this tense gives the illusion of historical events. Thus, the double meaning of the word Geschichte becomes important. Stories, then, are imaginative sketches of the past which are passed off

⁶ Cf. Horst Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern (München, 1962), pp. 21-32; Max Frisch, Ausgewählte Prosa, Nachwort von Joachim Kaiser (Frankfurt/Main, 1961), pp. 7-10.

as reality in order that the inner experience be understood.

Why is it so important that the inner experience be expressed and understood? Because it is often the inner experience which determines man's action. Frisch explains:

Die Erfahrung ist ein Einfall, der Einfall ist das wirkliche Ereignis, Vergangenheit eine Erfindung, die nicht zugibt, eine Erfindung zu sein, ein Entwurf rückwärts. Ich glaube, entscheidende Wendungen in einem Leben beruhen auf Vorkommnissen, die nie vorgekommen sind, auf Einbildungen, erzeugt von einer Erfahrung, die da ist, bevor eine Geschichte sie zu verursachen scheint. Die Geschichte drückt sie nur aus.⁷

These ideas are obviously part of the philosophy upon which Frisch's own efforts as an author are based. And, interestingly enough, Frisch also applies these same ideas to Stiller. Anatol Ludwig Stiller, as narrator of many stories, has had many notions, i.e., inner experiences, which have, in fact, brought about decisive turns in his life. To express the inner experience (i.e., truth or the recognition or perception of truth) Stiller has to tell stories!

The purpose of this paper will be to investigate how Stiller tells stories and to see how Frisch arranges these stories of Stiller and just what they do reveal or express about Stiller.

⁷Ausgewählte Prosa, p. 9.

As a matter of convenience the term Geschichte will be translated simply as "story," although its double meaning (the narration of historical as well as fictional occurrences) must not be forgotten. On the other hand, the German word Erfahrung will be retained whenever it is necessary to differentiate between Erfahrung and Erlebnis, both of which would be translated as "experience."

CHAPTER I

THE ISIDOR STORY

The first forty pages of the book constitute Stiller's account of his imprisonment and his subsequent unsuccessful efforts to allay the suspicion against him. He finds himself becoming more and more involved in the personal affairs of the Anatol Ludwig Stiller who had disappeared six years earlier. He has received a letter from Stiller's brother, Wilfried. He has been told that Julika, convinced by the photos that he is her husband, is on her way by plane from Paris.

It is in anticipation of Julika's arrival that Stiller records the story of Isidor. He writes: "Ich werde ihr die kleine Geschichte von Isidor erzählen. Eine wahre Geschichte!"¹ Although Stiller has previously recorded the fact that he has told his guard and his defense attorney stories, this is the first instance in which he records a story in its entirety.

The five-page short story is about Isidor, a successful druggist and faithful husband for nine years.

¹Max Frisch, Stiller (Frankfurt/Main, 1954), p. 47. Subsequent page references to this text will appear after citations.

Only one thing bothered Isidor, who was by nature a calm and congenial man. He could not tolerate his wife's constant and suspicious questioning. His calm exterior belied his internal fury. One day in Marseille, when he and his wife were to take a steamer to Mallorca for a vacation, Isidor left the steamer shortly before its departure in order to buy a newspaper. After tarrying a bit, absorbed in his paper, Isidor found himself aboard a dirty freighter instead of the Mallorca steamer, which was already underway with his wife aboard.

In the French foreign legion, Isidor had a harder life than before. Escape was impossible. He sometimes thought of his wife and would have written, had it been permitted. With the legion Isidor was sent to many distant colonies. Eventually he forgot about his pharmacy and even lost his homesickness for his country.

It was decency, then, which many years later took Isidor back home. He returned one nice Sunday morning dressed in uniform, complete with helmet and revolver. As Isidor neared his house, he was recognized at once by his five children, so there was no possibility of turning back. He only hoped that his wife would not question him as before.

His family was in the garden when he arrived. It was his wife's birthday and the scene was idyllic as he greeted her and the overjoyed children. His poor wife

was so surprised, all she could do was to ask where he had been for so long. Taken aback, Isidor could not reply. He was no longer used to being married and answering questions. When she again questioned him, his response was automatic, concise. He put his helmet back on his head, took the revolver from his waist, fired three shots into the fancy birthday cake which was on the table, and left.

Although many people advised her to divorce the deserter, his wife waited faithfully for another year and, indeed, Isidor did return on the morning of her next birthday. But this visit lasted only three minutes. As soon as his wife asked where he had been this time, Isidor got up and left for the last time.

His wife finally consented to getting a divorce. The business was sold and after awhile she remarried for the children's sake. The children, however, never learned where their father had gone. Their mother did not even like for them to ask, for she herself should never have asked.

Thus ends the Isidor story--the first complete story that Stiller records, a story which he emphatically says is true and that he plans to tell Julika. It is not so much that the story is true, i.e., that these events occurred in reality, but rather that it represents a truth to Stiller. It illustrates one of his own Erfahrungen.

The parallels between Isidor and Stiller, himself, are numerous. Isidor, at the beginning of the story, was in his best years, had a good profession, and was a very conscientious, faithful husband. His quiet exterior concealed an inner fury (at his wife's continual questioning of where he had been) and he avoided arguments. Before he disappeared, Stiller, too, had been a relatively young man, a dedicated, although rather self-critical sculptor, and a very conscientious, if not wholly faithful husband. He, too, had a relatively calm exterior despite inner frustration and turmoil.

Isidor, like Stiller, had an attractive wife who was best described as "sehr liebenswert" (p. 47). She, however, had a habit of always questioning Isidor, always repeating the same questions. There was something of the martyr about her. Like Julika, she waited for her husband's return and was really ready to forgive him, although she could not curb her impulse to ask questions.

Both Isidor and Stiller loved their wives. They could not, however, tolerate always being put on the defensive. Isidor's disappearance was not actually planned. His preoccupation with the French newspaper was in a way a rebellion, but only a very quiet one. "Ein wenig, mag sein, tat er es aus purem Trotz gegen ihre Fragerai, wohin er denn ginge" (p. 47). Stiller, on the

other hand, planned his escape and made an open break.

Each, during his years of absence, underwent many changes. Each became acquainted with foreign lands and new threats; each found new confidence and self-reliance. Each spent some time in a desert, and in this barren surrounding discovered new meaning and value in life. "Das gelbe Fort, wo Isidor zum Mann erzogen wurde, stand einsam in der Wüste, deren Sonnenuntergänge er schätzen lernte" (p. 48). Each was to return a changed man.

Why return at all? "Es war--viele Jahre später--eine pure Anständigkeit von Isidor, als er eines schönen Morgens durch das Gartentor trat" (p. 48). Isidor, after all these years, still loved his wife, was still considerate, but he hoped for a change. "Es gab kein Zurück. Und Isidor schritt weiter als Mann, der er in harten Kämpfen geworden war, und in der Hoffnung, dass seine liebe Gattin, sofern sie zu Hause war, ihn nicht zur Rede stellen würde" (p. 49). And, indeed, for the briefest instant it appeared as if Isidor's hopes were to be realized.

Many changes had taken place. The children were older and had grown. His wife had a new dressing gown, sat under a new sun umbrella, and was served by a new maid. But the changes were external only. The old situation remained; the questioning began.

Isidor's response, however, was quite different.

His reaction was in keeping with the new habits which he had acquired as the result of his seven years of experience in the foreign legion.

Der Mann, einen Augenblick lang wie betäubt, setzte seine Tasse nieder; er war es einfach nicht mehr gewohnt, verheiratet zu sein. (49-50)

. . . war es für Isidor genug der trauten Heimkehr, er zog (wieder mit dem knappen Schwung der Routine, denke ich) den Revolver aus dem Gurt, gab drei Schüsse mitten in die weiche, bisher noch ungerührte und mit Zuckerschaum verzierte Torte. (50)

His departure a year later was without any shooting, but was just as abrupt.

Since Stiller plans to tell this story to Julika, he must intend it to illustrate that he, like Isidor, has changed. He has not returned merely to reestablish the old ties and resume the former way of life. The experiences and realizations which he has had will not enable him to tolerate being put back into his old defensive position. Isidor's ultimate departure should serve as a warning to Julika.

When Julika arrives for her first visit, she is convinced that the man in custody is indeed Stiller, her former husband. She asks him many questions, but is not open or receptive to his answers, as they do not correspond to her preconceived notions. Thus, when he feels that conversation is impossible with Julika, Stiller tells the Isidor story as he had planned to do.

Später—da mit lauter Fragen, die nicht einmal echte Fragen sind, indem sie ja nur eine einzige Antwort zulässt und alles andere als Ausrede einfach übergeht, auf die Dauer wohl kein Gespräch zu machen ist—erzähle ich die kleine Schnurre vom Isidor, dem Fall meiner schönen Besucherin angepasst, also unter Weglassung der fünf Kinder und unter freier Verwendung eines Traums, den ich neulich hatte: Isidor gibt, sooft er auftaucht, keine Schüsse in die Torte, sondern zeigt nur seine beiden Hände mit Wundmalen . . . Ein verrückter Traum! (65)

This version, which Stiller changes to fit Julika and the situation more exactly, shows the difference between Isidor and Stiller. Isidor has become the man of action; he reacts vigorously by firing his gun, by clapping his helmet back on his head, by rolling up his sleeves (as if he is ready to tackle whatever new problems arise) as he strides out of the garden.

Between the time when Stiller recorded the original Isidor story and the time that he actually tells the story to Julika, he has had the dream in which Isidor responds, not by shooting the birthday cake, but by simply holding up his hands with stigmata. This immediately recalls the crucifixion wounds of Christ and by this passive reaction, Isidor suggests that he, too, has been tortured and crucified. During the interim between the two versions of the story, Stiller has obviously decided to make his protest more passive. He sees himself as the victim of other people's questioning, of their preconceived notions and image of him.

Julika is apparently unimpressed with Stiller's Isidor story and remains oblivious to its relevance. She dismisses it as one of his "Hirngespinsten!" (65). She continues to be convinced that this man is the same man to whom she was married and who disappeared. Stiller is at a loss as how to convince her. Julika has a fixed idea about him and she is ready to forgive him as soon as he admits that he is her husband. Using almost the exact wording as Isidor's wife in the story, she asks where he has been for so many years, why he never wrote, etc.

Stiller endures it only for so long.

Ich weiss nicht mehr, was sie noch alles redet, sie trieb es, bis ich sie packte, und noch dann, unerschütterlich in ihrer fixen Idee, indem sie jede Regung von meiner Seite, ob Lachen oder Zittern, nur als Bestätigung nahm, hörte sie nicht auf, mir zu verzeihen, ich packte sie, ich schüttelte sie, dass es nur so von Kämmelein regnete, und schleuderte sie auf die harte Pritsche. (69)

Like Isidor in the first version, he reacts violently, in spite of his resolve to remain passive. The fact that Stiller and Julika act and react in this manner, substantiates the validity which the Isidor story holds for their particular situation.

CHAPTER II

THE RIP VAN WINKLE STORY

Toward the end of his first notebook, Stiller records his discouragement about his present situation. All of his attempts to communicate with his defense attorney have been futile. The defense attorney assumes that this is the Anatol Ludwig Stiller who disappeared from Switzerland six years ago. Stiller cannot convince him that he is not the same man.

As one last attempt to help his defense attorney understand his position, Stiller tells him the story of Rip van Winkle.

Noch einmal (zum letztenmal!) habe ich heute den Versuch unternommen, meinem so beflissenen Verteidiger aus seinem nachgerade ergreifenden Missverständnis meiner Lage, das ihm so viel Arbeit verursacht, vergebliche Arbeit und so viel Ärger mit mir, der ich andererseits für seine tägliche Zigarre doch so dankbar bin, herauszuhelfen. (81)

Stiller does not merely launch into the story, but first goes to great lengths to impress the attorney with its importance. He repeatedly goes through the motions of lighting his cigar, interrupting his own actions each time to ask his attorney if he knows the American fairy-tale. This is his gimmick to get his attorney's attention.

Each time the lighting of his cigar was prevented:

durch Rip van Winkle, dessen Marchen offensichtlich sogar akuter war als meine Zigarre--nur so konnte ich meinen geschäftigen Verteidiger überhaupt zum Zuhören, zum aufmerksamen Zuhören nötigen. (82)

The action takes place in the Hudson River area of upper New York State. Rip was a good-hearted good-for-nothing whose head was filled with impractical thoughts which had nothing to do with reality. Rip's wife and two children were constant reminders that he should be practical. He knew that he must have a profession, so he pretended to be a hunter; but generally he returned from his hunts with nothing but a bad conscience. Unlike his active and industrious ancestors who had first explored and settled the region, Rip was introspective. He was unhappy with his existence and himself. "Er hatte mehr von sich erwartet" (83). His sole accomplishment was to tell stories at the village inn. His neighbors liked him, for Rip was very careful to offend no one, and they always smiled at his stories.

Rip's remarkable adventure began as one of his usual hunting expeditions. He and his faithful dog Baul started out on the hunt, but dropped their sham of determination and purposefulness as soon as they were out of sight of the villagers. Rip wandered through the hills, lost in his thoughts. At one point, he saw a deer

and remembered his responsibility to feed his family. He took aim, pulled the trigger, but nothing happened as there was no powder in the gun.

Suddenly he heard his name being called and an old man appeared from the slough. The gentleman wore old fashioned dress, complete with a moustache like Rip's ancestors, and was bent under a very heavy keg of brandy. As he came closer he flattered Rip by calling him a polite and helpful fellow and then he put the heavy keg on Rip's back. Together they proceeded through territory unfamiliar to Rip, toward another slough from which sounds like thunder were emanating.

When they reached their destination and the keg was taken from his hurting shoulders, Rip straightened up and looked around. The old fellow introduced Rip to a group of bowlers who appeared to be aged Dutchmen and, although no one spoke in greeting, Rip nodded politely to the group. They returned to their game and Rip had to fill their mugs and even serve as pinboy in order to be polite.

These activities kept him so busy that Rip had time for only an occasional sip of brandy. He would scarcely get the pins reset and be ready to reach for a drink when the next ball would come. Since no one spoke, Rip had no opportunity to ask questions. Just as he set

the pins up again, he had the feeling that they were grinning behind his back, but he could not look because he had to jump to get out of the way of the oncoming ball. This pinsetting and brandy-pouring went on and on--Rip had to wake up!

When Rip awoke it was sunset. He would have dismissed it all as a dream if Bauz had come when he whistled. He soon discovered that the flintlock at his side was rusted and rotted, that the skeleton at his other side looked very much as if it had been Bauz, and, most incredible of all, when he stroked his chin in wonderment, he seized a beard that reached down to his waist.

Driven by hunger and curiosity, Rip returned to his village only to find that he no longer recognized the streets and houses--his own house had been long in ruins. Surrounded by children and strangers, he learned that his old friends and wife were dead. He cautiously inquired about Rip van Winkle and was told how he must have fallen into a slough or been captured by Indians some twenty years earlier.

When the people wanted to know who he was, Rip thought and replied:

Gott weiss es! . . . Gott weiss es, gestern noch meinte ich es zu wissen, aber heute, da ich erwacht bin, wie soll ich es wissen? . . . und umsonst erzählte er die wunderliche Geschichte mit den Kegeln, die kurze Geschichte, wie er sein Leben verschlafen hätte. (88)

The crowd dispersed, but one young woman, Rip's daughter, stayed to ask what he knew of Rip van Winkle. Rip was tempted to say that he was her father, but he suddenly realized that he had indeed changed--he was no longer the squirrel hunter who told tales in the village inn. Finally he told her that her father was dead.

Rip lived out his years in the village, as a stranger in a strange world. He did not expect the people to believe his stories about Henry Hudson, who had explored this region and who still bowled with his followers deep in the hills. On hot summer days when they heard thunder like the rolling of bowling balls, the people laughed. They thought it was simply a regular storm--which it was.

Thus Stiller finishes his Märchen and finally lights his cigar. The defense attorney is disgusted. He can not defend Stiller with Märchen; he needs to know the truth!

This Märchen constitutes one of the best-defined stories inserted in the diary narrative. Its unity and completeness are borne out by the fact that Frisch first presented it as a radio play in 1953, before it appeared as a part of Stiller in 1954. The story itself is an adaptation of Washington Irving's fairy-tale published in 1819, in The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. The story is essentially the same, but Irving's Rip is,

in general, a less sympathetic character. His wife is a horrible shrew who henpecks Rip until he sneaks away on his hunting expeditions.

Irving's Rip also experiences a change when he returns from his twenty-year nap, but it is a less significant change than that which Frisch's Rip undergoes. When Irving's Rip returns to his village, he remarks: "Everything's changed, and I'm changed and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"¹ Despite this exclamation, Irving's Rip soon identifies himself to his daughter and neighbors. His relationship to the village has also changed: he again takes part in village gossip but now as an esteemed patriarch, the envy of all henpecked husbands. Both Rips tell stories, but the ones by Irving's Rip are more nearly gossip and do not hold for him the personal significance that the stories do for Frisch's Rip. Irving's story is a much more straightforward narrative and contains very little symbolism in comparison to Frisch's version.

Frisch obviously made these significant changes in the basic story in order that Rip's story would be more relevant to Stiller's situation. Rip and Stiller

¹Washington Irving, "Rip van Winkle," The Sketch Book (New York, 1954), p. 43.

share many characteristics. Both are dreamers rather than men of action. However, they are plagued by dissatisfaction and guilty consciences and make honest but futile attempts to do that which they feel is their duty. In order to express their internal realizations, they tell stories which, unfortunately, are considered harmless enough but are laughed at by their listeners. They have similar backgrounds (impoverished families headed by long-suffering wives, little-respected niches in village life, etc.) and their major experiences are essentially the same. Both have simply missed a segment of their normal lives--Rip, twenty years; Stiller, six. During this time, they have undergone changes. They are no longer the same persons and therefore can no longer resume their former existences.

Frisch has packed his version of the Rip van Winkle story with symbolism. The tightly interwoven symbolic elements give the necessary depth to Rip's experience and thus illustrate more vividly Stiller's own Erfahrungen.

To conform to social demands as well as for practical necessity Rip needed a profession, so he chose to be a hunter. This was a convenient choice as he could go hunting and then be free to pursue his daydreams. Even the game, however, refused to be deluded by his guise. "Das Reh, das ihn offenbar durchaus nicht für einen Jäger hielt, schickte sich an, in Gelassenheit zu weiden" (84).

Rip's best intentions to be a successful hunter were fruitless. When he recalled his duty to provide for his family and attempted to shoot the deer, he failed, despite his strong determination.

Man muß ein Jäger sein! sagte sich Rip, indem er plötzlich an die abendliche Wirtschaft dachte und an sein getreues Weib, und nahm seine Flinte in den Anschlag. Er zielte auf das Reh, das ihn anblickte; er drückte auch ab, nur war kein Pulver drin! (84)

Two levels of meaning can be detected here.

First, Rip was the man of action who by his prowess as a hunter could provide food for his family. At this level he is obviously a failure. But Rip was not just hunting game. He, like Stiller, was hunting the answers to the questions that constantly concerned him. Filled with self-doubt and castigation, he sought the self-knowledge and truth which would give him inner confidence as well as external success.

The only being who understood Rip was Bauz, his faithful dog and constant companion. Bauz always tucked his tail between his legs whenever he heard Rip's wife coming and he did not understand her scolding any better than Rip did. It is significant that on the day of their unusual adventure, Bauz's reactions are described in more detail than Rip's. When Rip tried to shoot the deer, the dog barked as if the shot had rung out. And it was Bauz

who showed the most apprehension and hesitancy about following the old stranger into the woods. "Auch Bauz, der treue Hund, fühlte sich gar nicht heimisch, schmiegte sich an die Beine seines Herrn, winselte" (85).

When Rip awoke from his dream, he immediately missed Bauz. "Wäre bloss der Hund mit seinem getreuen Gewedel gekommen, hätte Rip nicht länger an den Traum gedacht" (87). It was his dog's absence that made Rip aware of his experience. "Dass die verbliebenen Knochen, die neben seinem Beutel lagen, die letzten Reste seines treuen Hundes sein sollten, das Skelett von Bauz, das wollte Rip nicht glauben" (87).

The skeleton at Rip's side confirmed Bauz's fate. Because of their extraordinarily sympathetic relationship and their very similar reactions, Bauz can be considered symbolic of Rip himself. Bauz's death, therefore, would illustrate the demise of Rip, the old squirrel hunter, much as Jim's death in the cave story represents the discarding of Stiller's former self.

Symbolic of Rip's ancestry and ties to the past is his weapon—an extremely heavy and ornate flintlock which he had inherited from his ancestors. As has already been pointed out, Rip was very much different from his forefathers. Therefore, it is not surprising that this gun was, in fact, a burden for Rip and would not function

properly to serve his purposes. For example, it failed him when he attempted to fell the deer.

After a twenty-year lapse of time, Rip found his flintlock with the barrel rusted and the wood in the stock rotten. Realizing that it was ruined and could not possibly be of use to him, Rip threw the gun away. After he had thrown it away, he stood up to start out again for his village and whatever new life awaited him there. The throwing away of the gun (symbolic of Rip's great responsibility to continue the tradition of his ancestors) signifies Rip's total break with the past.

Also of symbolic importance is the keg of brandy which Rip had to carry to the gorge and serve the bowlers. The keg was a tremendously heavy burden, which Rip was induced to carry. It contained an inexhaustible supply of brandy which, incidentally, was Rip's very favorite kind. Although the bowlers quaffed great quantities of it in silence, Rip himself rarely got a sip of it.

The bottomless cask is traditionally a Greek symbol for "useless labor and, on another level, the apparent futility of all existence."² The same meaning is certainly applicable here. Rip's entire expenditure of time and effort has been useless. Just as he is only

²J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York, 1962), p. 37.

rewarded by an occasional sip of brandy, so has he during his entire life only been rewarded by occasional thoughts and glimmers of truth which he has never been able to relate to the reality of everyday existence.

The futility of Rip's best efforts is emphasized in his role as pinboy. The game of bowling (life) goes on and on in endless repetition. Essential to this game are the pins which must always be reset in order to be knocked down by the next ball. In order to cooperate with the players Rip is forced to assume the task of resetting the pins, a task which constantly places him in danger of being injured by the oncoming ball.

The pins are like the stories that Rip tells to his wife and neighbors. They are his attempts to relate the personal truths and realizations that he is always seeking. Just as the pins are always knocked down by the bowling ball, his stories are always misunderstood and annihilated by ridicule.

Rip himself made this analogy when he tried to figure out how he could tell his strange experience to the villagers. "Ein wenig, gewiss kamen sie ihm wie die wackligen Kegel vor, diese Geschichten, die er immer aufzustellen hatte, damit die andern sie umwerfen konnten" (87). Despite this realization, Rip knew of no other way to give expression to his experience and resigned

himself to being misunderstood. He spent his remaining few years in his home village,

Ein Fremdling in fremder Welt, und verlangte nicht, dass sie ihm glaubten, wenn er von Hendrik Hudson erzählte, dem Entdecker des Flusses und Landes, und von seiner Schiffsmannschaft, die von Zeit zu Zeit sich in den Schluchten versammelte und Kegel spielte, und wenn er meinte, dort müssten sie ihren alten Rip van Winkle suchen. (88-89)

The difficulty that Rip has in conveying his experiences and insights to others links him most closely to Stiller. Neither Rip nor Stiller can make people realize the significance of the stories which they tell, and neither can find a more meaningful mode of expression. Stiller has repeatedly tried to communicate with his defense attorney and others and has repeatedly failed to make himself understood. By telling this Märchen he makes a very sincere attempt to explain his position to his attorney and, once again, the attempt is futile.

Although Stiller maintains that this will be the last time that he will try to help his attorney understand the truth, it is not. As he continues his diary, he records other stories, continually hoping to make himself and his Erfahrungen clear.

CHAPTER III

THE CAVE STORY

Shortly after beginning his third notebook, Stiller tells what is the longest and possibly most significant story of all. Once again it illustrates one of his own Erfahrungen and, in fact, he purports it to be the story of his fourth murder.

The story took place when Stiller was a cowboy in Texas. While horseback riding on his day off, Stiller happened to discover a cave. His curiosity was piqued and he anxiously awaited another opportunity to return to explore the cave. Subsequent attempts to return to the cave were futile, as Stiller failed to remember its exact location.

Toward evening of one excursion, Stiller happened upon the cave again. Equipped with lantern, lasso, and some food, he began his exploration. Increasing curiosity and boldness led him from the upper cavern down into a lower labyrinth where the light of his lantern suddenly fell upon a skeleton. Stiller was quite frightened and at once decided to return to the surface as his supply of lantern fuel was running low.

When he returned to the ranch, Stiller confided in his best friend, Jim. He found it extremely difficult to describe his discovery and made plans for the two of them to explore the cave together.

With supplies and provisions for five days, Stiller and Jim made their way deep into the cave. It was in their sixty-seventh hour underground that the accident occurred. Jim slipped and broke his left foot. Both were weary, their nerves were on edge and Jim immediately blamed Stiller for his accident. Their difficulties now began--both real and imagined. Their tedious return to the surface was hampered by physical handicaps and increasingly intense psychological fears. Their friendship gave away to mutual distrust and, before a high, perpendicular wall, they came to blows although they both knew that if either slipped it would be his death.

The story itself ends with the two engaged in the fatal fisticuffs, but Stiller comments that only one ever returned from the cave. His name was James Larkin White--the young cowboy credited with the discovery of Carlsbad Caverns.

The cave story is one of the most tightly constructed of Stiller's stories, and, in fact, has many characteristics of a Novelle. In A History of the German

Novelle, E. K. Bennett enumerates six characteristics which will serve as a basis for the analysis of this story.

First, he explains that the Novelle "restricts itself to a single event," that it shows "the effect of this event upon a person or group of persons," and that it presents the event as "chance."¹ The story which Stiller relates to Knobel upon this occasion is restricted to a single event--the discovery and exploration of the cave. The effect of the discovery and exploration clearly is upon the discoverer and explorer. The initial discovery was by chance as was the rediscovery when Stiller happened to notice some bats emerging from the rocks.

Bennett maintains that the Novelle

must present some aspect of life (event, situation, conflict) which arouses interest by its strangeness, remoteness from everyday happenings, but at the same time its action must take place in the world of reality and not that of pure imagination (Bennett, p. 18).

The discovery of a cave is relatively unique but definitely within the realm of possibility. Stiller gives credence to his discovery by the description of the countryside surrounding the cavern and the elaborate discussion of the geological evolution of the cave with its many formations.

¹E. K. Bennett, A History of the German Novelle (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 18-19.

To remove any doubt about the existence of the cave, Stiller says that it is Carlsbad Cavern and interjects descriptions of Carlsbad Cavern, as seen today by tourists, with descriptions of the cave when he first saw it. Even the discoverer and explorer of Carlsbad Cavern (who was named James Larkin White--Stiller's assumed name) had been accompanied by an unknown companion.

Bennett describes the construction of a Novelle as having

a certain turning-point at which the development of the narrative moves unexpectedly in a different direction . . . and arrives at a conclusion which surprises, but at the same time satisfies logically (Bennett, pp. 18-19).

Stiller's cave story has a definite turning point; that is, when Jim slips and breaks his left foot during their sixty-seventh hour underground. Up until this point the narrative has dealt with their cautious and satisfactory descent. Suddenly they are both consumed by the fear that they will not be able to get back to the surface. The remainder of the narrative describes their slow, painful ascent, stressing the mutual psychological distrust which ultimately leads to the death of one of the two "friends." This is an unexpected conclusion, made plausible only by Jim's accident and the events and emotions which it precipitated.

According to Bennett, each Novelle should have "some definite and striking subject" and "this striking element in the subject matter is frequently connected with a concrete object, which may in some Novellen acquire a certain inner symbolical significance" (Bennett, p. 19). The cave itself is the striking element in subject matter which serves as a concrete object or "Falke" as Paul Heyse would term it. The cave does very definitely have symbolic significance which will be discussed later in this paper.

Bennett makes one further point with regard to the effect or the impact of the event upon the person or group of persons in a Novelle. The effect

is to reveal qualities which were latent and may have been unsuspectedly present in them, the event being used as the acid which separates and reveals the various qualities in the person or persons under investigation (Bennett, p. 19).

The impact of the exploration of the cave does reveal to Stiller certain qualities about himself. It is, in fact, to clarify these qualities and to describe his "fourth murder" that Stiller relates this particular cave story.

Stiller tells his story to Knobel, his guard, who visits him one Sunday specifically to hear the story of Stiller's "fourth murder." It is, then, his conversation with Knobel that forms the framework for his story. (The existence of such a frame is another typical characteristic

of a Novelle.) Stiller concludes the first person narrative with the two friends fighting in the cave. In the following part of the frame he sums up the story:

Ich weiss nicht . . . welcher von den beiden Freunden eigentlich den mörderischen Streit begonnen hat, der Ehrlichere vermutlich, und jedenfalls ist nur einer aus der Kaverne gestiegen, der Stärkere vermutlich. (202)

Knobel is somewhat confused as to whether Stiller is the Jim White who first explored Carlsbad Cavern. Stiller's reply clearly indicates the symbolic significance of his story. "Nein . . . das gerade nicht! Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche--genau" (202).

This eighteen-page story attests to Frisch's skill at storytelling. It is a fast-paced, gripping adventure story. In the treatment of the subject matter, Frisch employs the tension and tight construction of a Novelle and a closer look at the various elements in the story reveals a complex network of symbolism.

In Jungian psychology, the cave is symbolic of the human unconscious. This meaning is also applicable to the cave which Stiller discovers and explores in his story.

Weary of his daily existence as a cowboy in Texas, he was out riding on the prairie, deep in thought. While searching for a spring to quench his thirst, he happened upon an abyss. His curiosity compelled him to look into

the darkness. "Niemand befahl mir, in diese Grotte zu steigen; trotzdem war ich sehr beklommen, und meine Entdeckung liess mich nicht mehr los" (185). He accidentally dislodged a rock which fell into the darkness, causing an echo which seemed never-ending.

Strangely frightened and yet captivated by his discovery, the cowboy awaited his next free day so that he could explore the cave. In two separate, subsequent descents he succeeded in penetrating deep into the cave, exploring its various levels. These various levels can be seen as representative of different levels of the human mind and personality.

It was not without considerable difficulty and persistence that the searching cowboy relocated the cave and began his first descent. As he investigated the first level of the cavern, he found fragments of pottery—evidence that others had previously been in the cavern. He lost his apprehension and was rather disappointed that his discovery was rather shallow, when the light from his lantern revealed a gaping darkness before him.

Once again frightened but curious, he tied his lantern onto his lasso and lowered it into the depths. Another world was revealed—a dream world filled with glittering stone formations. His anxiety abated by boldness, he climbed down to the next level. He had mixed

feelings; it was as if he were about to attain all of his wishes and at the same time as if he were totally alienated from the world and his normal human existence. He was enticed by the labyrinth, "halb selig, als wäre ich am Ziel aller Wünsche, und halb entsetzt, als wäre ich schon verloren" (189).

What was his goal?

Wohin denn wollte ich? Wahrscheinlich wollte ich einfach in eine Kaverne gelangen, wo es nicht weitergeht, wo das Ungewisse aufhört, wo die Steine, die sich unter meinen Stiefeln lösten, nicht immer noch in weitere Tiefen kollerten (190).

His search then was for certainty. If the cave was his unconscious, he was exploring to find his true self, he was looking for complete knowledge of himself. He failed to reach his goal, for suddenly his lantern revealed a skeleton. He was terrified and returned to the surface as quickly as possible.

Back at the ranch he tried to describe his discovery to his best friend, Jim. Describing the myriad formations in the cave he remarked: "Alles, was die Menschenseele je an Formen erträumte, hier ist es noch einmal in Versteinerung wiederholt und aufbewahrt, scheint es, für die Ewigkeit" (193). In similar fashion the human unconscious stores up and preserves dreams and desires. This also echoes Jung's concept of the collective unconscious in

which archetypal forms are contained.

He described the impossibility of complete knowledge or total exploration.

Immer wieder klappt es in Finsternisse, die eine Laterne nicht ausleuchtet; man wirft einen Stein hinab, fröstelt vor Schauer, wenn sein Kollern schon lange verstummt ist, und weiss, das Labyrinth nimmt kein Ende, auch wenn es gelänge, die Schluoch zu überqueren (194).

The second descent into the cave was made with Jim. They were better equipped and dared this time to go much deeper than the level where the skeleton was. In their sixty-seventh hour underground the accident occurred—Jim broke his left foot. From then on the cave was for them a horror. It presented a mental as well as physical obstacle course. A perpendicular wall was the supreme threat. They could not both scale it and it was here that Jim fell to his death.

Jim in the story represents Stiller's alter ego, in both senses of the term. First, as a confidential, bosom friend; and second, as a second self. It is as bosom friend that Jim questions Stiller concerning his whereabouts on his free days and it is as bosom friend that Stiller confides in Jim and shares his discovery with him. Their sentimental tenderness for each other asserts itself amid their exhortations of friendship as they both attempt to escape from the cave.

It is as Stiller's second self that Jim distrusts Stiller, who, despite torn hands, is the one more likely to get out of the cave. It seems that Jim would rather they both die in the cave than to be left alone in the darkness while Stiller supposedly went for help. Finally Stiller has no other alternative than to overpower Jim in order to save himself. The fact that Stiller and his friend both have the same name--Jim White--is further evidence that they are both aspects of one personality. Jim, Stiller's former self, perishes in the cave. Charles Hoffmann makes this very point in speaking of the tales which are contained in Stiller:

The most important of these tales are the two in which Stiller describes his exploration of a vast and dangerous cave he had discovered. His hazardous descent was, of course, his descent into himself; and the second time down he managed to save himself only by abandoning a friend whose name was also Jim White . . . that is, by abandoning his former self.²

The cave, then, was ultimately both a cradle and a crypt. A place for the rebirth of Stiller who emerged a new individual after this exploration of himself, the place of death for Jim.

The skeleton is also an interesting image in the

²Charles Hoffmann, "The Search for Self, Inner Freedom And Relatedness in the Novels of Max Frisch," The Contemporary Novel in German (Austin-London, 1967), pp. 103-104.

cave story. When he first saw it, Stiller was so startled that he cried out and stumbled so that a piece of glass from his lantern broke and cut him in the face. Of his reaction, he said:

Das Gefühl, in einer Falle zu sein und wie dieser Vorgänger nie wieder herauszukommen, . . . lähmte mich an Leib und Seele; ich hatte mich setzen müssen . . . und musste meinen ganzen Verstand zusammennehmen, um nicht das Skelett, das da im runden Schein der Lampe lag, schlechterdings für mein eigenes zu halten.
(191)

In spite of the fright which it had caused him, Stiller credits the skeleton with saving his life. Until he saw the skeleton he had been so engrossed in exploring the cave that he had forgotten about time and had not realized how low his supply of lantern fuel had gotten, without which he would not have been able to find his way out of the cave again.

It seems, then, that the skeleton serves as a forewarning. It, of course, represents death, and Stiller immediately thought of his own vulnerability and returned to the surface. Inasmuch as he inadvertently viewed the skeleton as his own, it foreshadows his death or the death of one aspect of his personality--i.e., Jim. During the second descent when he was accompanied by Jim he dared to descend to deeper levels, to probe beyond where the skeleton lay. Significantly, it was next to the

skeleton that the fight which ended with Jim's death took place. Stiller made several references to the skeleton as being the remains of his predecessor and just before the fight begins he remarked that they once again noticed the skeleton: "dieses Skelett eines vornüber gekrümmten Menschen, der an dieser Stelle ganz allein (oder waren auch die schon zu zweit gewesen?)" (201).

The story abounds with light-dark symbolism. It was midday when Stiller first discovered the cave which looked "schwarz wie die Nacht" (185). The second time that he found the cave it was twilight, and as he investigated the uppermost cavern he could see through the opening of the cave the stars twinkling in the evening sky. He refers to the cave as "diese Finsternis im Innern der Erde" (190) and remarks that ". . . fiel alles wieder in Finsternis, wie nie gewesen, und es war der Finsternis nicht anzusehen, ob Finsternis des Gesteins oder Finsternis der Leere" (190). As he reached the entrance of the cave after this first descent, it was dawn. His first exploration, therefore, took place during the familiar darkness of night and led him down into the darkness of the unknown, of the uncertain, the unexplored, and the threatening.

The dangerous aspect of the darkness was significantly emphasized during the second descent. Jim, the injured and therefore weaker of the two, was particularly fearful. Stiller said that Jim distrusted him because

"er es . . . für durchaus möglich hielt, dass ich ihn, meinen einzigen Freund damals, der tödlichen Finsternis überliesse" (199).

Light, the antithesis of darkness, is represented by the lantern used to illuminate the exploration of the cave and its darkness. The lantern traditionally symbolizes the individual life in the face of cosmic existence, the transitory fact in the face of eternal truth, distraction in the face of essence.³

For his first exploration into the cave Stiller is equipped with lantern and lasso. He describes his discoveries as they are revealed by the light of his lantern. For example, he describes his discovery of the deeper cavern or "pit": "als plötzlich der Schein meiner Laterne--ich werde den Augenblick nie vergessen!--vom Boden verschluckt war" (188). Likewise, he always describes the skeleton as lying in the encircling light from his lantern.

By describing only those objects in the cave which are illuminated by the lantern, Stiller restricts the narrative perspective so that the presence of darkness outside the range of the lantern is always felt by the reader. This contributes to the suspense of the scene as the reader shares in Stiller's surprise at each new discovery. It serves to underline the importance of the lantern as shedding light upon the features of the cave

³Cirlot, p. 72.

and hence revealing the heretofore unknown.

When Stiller was once more safely above ground after his first exploration it was already dawn. But, "obschon es noch ein dämmerheller Himmel war, liess ich meine Laterne brennen, als müsste, wenn meine Laterne erlischt, alles erlöschen" (191). This illustrates his dependence upon the lantern as the means to his end, as his hope for discovering truth in the midst of darkness, as the key to his safety.

Even if the lantern was his main hope, Stiller realized its limitations. In describing the cave to Jim he remarked: "Immer wieder klappt es in Finsternisse, die eine Laterne nicht ausleuchtet" (194). The vastness of the cave (i.e., his unconscious) can only be partially explored, never revealed in its entirety.

For the second trip into the cave Stiller and Jim were equipped with two lanterns and fuel enough for 120 hours. After the accident, Jim's total dependency upon his lantern became evident. He repeatedly refused to extinguish his lantern, even temporarily, to conserve fuel, and, his dogged determination gave rise to many disagreements and mutual distrust. It was as if his salvation depended upon his lantern.

When Stiller awoke from a brief nap, he discovered that Jim had smashed his lantern, "um dieser idiotischen

Verschwendung ein Ende zu machen" (199). Jim stubbornly clung to the remaining lantern. As they reached the last perpendicular wall which separated them from the uppermost cavern, Stiller made one last proposition. He would give Jim the remainder of his meat if Jim would give him the lantern so that he could climb to the top and go for help. Jim's answer was a horrible laugh as he hobbled quickly over to the base of the wall and attempted to climb it. Their fatal struggle began and the last thing that the shine from the lantern revealed was the skeleton of their predecessor.

Thus the light gave way to darkness and Jim was lost.

One additional interesting bit of symbolism in the cave story is the religious symbolism inherent in the terms which Stiller uses to describe the cave. He notes that the entrance of the cave resembles a shark's mouth and refers to it consistently as "eine Pforte" which has connotations of a majestic doorway to a cathedral or sacred place. The cave, itself, he calls "eine Grotte". Therefore, it is more than a cave, it has the inner significance of a shrine. He personalizes this significance even more by calling it not merely "eine Grotte" but rather "meine Grotte."

The uppermost cavern is described as being

approximately as large as the interior of Notre Dame. Stiller carries the comparison of the cavern to a cathedral further by referring to the little openings or rooms adjoining the main chamber as "kleine Kapellen." A deeper chamber is called the "Dome Room," while the chamber in which their friendship gave way to complete distrust is called "Rock of Ages."

All of these terms, bearing specific or indirect religious implications and overtones, emphasize the sacredness of the cave for Stiller. It was to him a shrine, a place where he could seek and find truth, a place where he could regain a new life.

Just as the cave story is packed with symbolism which intensifies the experience and binds the various elements inextricably together, so does the story as a whole have great symbolic significance for the entire novel. In short, it illustrates one of Stiller's Erfahrungen.

Stiller, himself, clearly states this in his concluding remark to Knobel: "Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche—genau" (202). This is Stiller's most direct admission that he tells stories in order to illustrate his own Erfahrungen.

The parallels between the cave story and Stiller's situation are relatively clear. During his absence from Switzerland he has been searching, exploring, seeking

his real identity and the courage to be true to this real self. In his quest he has plumbed the innermost depths of his being and has come to a realization, a recognition of the person he really is. Once having found this essence of his being, he has been forced to sacrifice his former self, to deny it at every turn. Hence his initial and continual assertion: "Ich bin nicht Stiller!" He has, in fact, undergone a change.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLORENCE STORY

Erzählungen des Anatol Ludwig Stiller, published by Suhrkamp with an epilogue by Walter Jens, includes four stories from Frisch's novel: "Die Geschichte von Isidor," "Das Märchen von Rip van Winkle," "Als Cowboy in Texas" (cave story), and "Eine Mulattin namens Florence."¹ The last one is different from the others. Although it stands alone as a complete story in this edition it does not do so in the novel.

"Eine Mulattin namens Florence" does not stand in relation to Stiller as a distinct and unique unity and should not be considered as such. In his diary Stiller actually records two different versions of the story of his relationship with Florence. The first version appears at the middle of his first notebook, while the second and longer version comes near the end of his third notebook. Each version can stand alone, but a comparison of the two is necessary for an accurate assessment of their combined contribution to the novel as a whole.

The first version is recorded in the earlier days

¹Max Frisch, Erzählungen des Anatol Ludwig Stiller (Frankfurt/Main, 1961).

of Stiller's imprisonment and his most vehement insistence that he is not the man that the authorities believe him to be. Stiller tells the tale to Knobel, who is his most receptive listener and ready believer. After discussing with Knobel the appearance of Julika, who has just come from Paris, Stiller tells this story to describe "his type of woman." The story is that of the third murder he commits, but this is only of incidental importance.

Stiller and Florence were at a deserted spot by the Rio Grande, enroute to Mexico, when a limousine driven by Joe, Florence's husband, came toward them. It was Joe who fired the first shots. Getting a nod from Florence in response to his question as to whom she loved, Stiller shot and killed Joe. Florence rewarded him with a kiss and later that night they successfully crossed the border into Mexico.

As Knobel obviously was waiting for him to continue his story, Stiller next tells where and when he first met Florence. Without funds, he had been fishing on the Oregon coast one Sunday afternoon, when he noticed a great cloud of smoke. A large sawmill was on fire and the houses surrounding it were also beginning to burn. There was a strong wind and no water was available to quench the blaze, which threatened a nearby gas tank.

Stiller noticed Florence, who ran back into her

little house even though its roof was starting to burn. He ran after her into the house and found her standing motionless and crying. She wanted him to save the refrigerator, but he grabbed her and carried her out to safety. The way she clung to his neck and smiled at him belied her concern that her husband would find them. Stiller stole a Plymouth and they drove off. Within four hours they were already in California on their way to Mexico.

Much later in his prison diary Stiller records the second version of his relationship with Florence. He deplores the fact, maintained by Dr. Bohlenblust, his attorney, that simply because a person can tell all about unusual places and things, it does not necessarily mean that he has been there or done those things himself. He muses that this is an age of reproduction; every person is a "Fernseher, Fernhörer, Fernwisseur" (219). Stiller realizes that he can not prove that he has learned all of these things from first-hand experience.

Once again in desperation he exclaims: "Wozu also die Erzählerei! Es heisst nicht, dass einer dabeigewesen ist. Mein Verteidiger hat recht. Und doch!" (220). Stiller swears that the following story is true.

Stiller tells how he was enamoured of his Negro neighbor in Oakland, California. He dreamed wild dreams about her and used every conceivable opportunity to see

her and speak with her. Their exchanges usually consisted of greetings and in Florence asking him about his cat, Little Grey.

When Florence was not at home, Stiller often went out looking for her about town. He describes how one evening he actually found her. It was in a bar, and she was dancing with a handsome army sergeant, Joe. Joe's tremendous physique reminded Stiller of one of Michelangelo's slaves. Florence sometimes danced alone and exhausted four different partners in all. Observing her physical stamina and grace, Stiller felt like a cripple and knew that he could never satisfy her.

The next episode was at the wedding reception of Florence and Joe which was held in her parents' yard, next door to Stiller. From his window, Stiller watched the preparations for the party and the arrival of the guests. He watched for quite awhile and was amazed how very much the Negroes imitated the social customs of white society. When Florence's father came to invite him to join the reception, Stiller accepted. Florence introduced her new husband and then asked Stiller about his cat.

Three Sundays later, Stiller went to a service at the Baptist Church where Florence sang in the choir. Once again he observed the way in which the Negroes interacted socially, this time participating in a

worship service.

After Joe's leave was up, Florence again lived with her parents, next door to Stiller. One day she called to Stiller from the fence between their yards. She was holding Little Grey, who had a wound on her nose, and she admonished Stiller for being cruel and not having pity on the poor cat and told him that he should love Little Grey. Thus, Stiller ends his account of his relationship to the mulatto girl, Florence.

These two accounts of Stiller and Florence differ greatly in form and tone. The second version, which is the longer, is chiefly a descriptive narrative. Stiller observes Florence and her Negro friends and relatives and makes philosophical comments upon these observations. His chief realization comes when he notices the Negro girls in church with their straightened hair and white-powdered necks.

(Ach, diese Sehnsucht, weiss zu sein, und diese Sehnsucht, glattes Haar zu haben, und diese lebenslängliche Bemühung, anders zu sein, als man erschaffen ist, diese grosse Schwierigkeit, sich selbst einmal anzunehmen, ich kannte sie und sah nur eine eigene Not einmal von aussen, sah die Absurdität unserer Sehnsucht, anders sein zu wollen, als man ist!) (228)

This parenthetical interjection shows that Stiller is fully aware of the reasons behind his own actions, of the absurdity of not accepting himself as he is.

The first version is packed with action and contains very little description and no detached, objective comments. It is, in essence, an intensified, abbreviated version of the later story. Stiller's wishes and desires are put into deeds and actions. He confronts the elements and actually wins Florence from Joe.

Both stories are examples of a man-woman relationship which afford Stiller two different roles. In the first, he is the brave, triumphant man-of-action. In the second, he is relegated to the wistful role of the inadequate observer.

Florence, too, is presented differently in the two stories, although the changes in her are not as basic as those in Stiller. The Florence from Oregon is sensuous, responsive, and there is a natural wildness about her. The Florence in California is shown in the context of her social milieu. Her wildness and physical naturalness are reduced to the flowing gracefulness of her gestures and movements. Her responses are no longer callous and uninhibited; she is genuinely thoughtful, considerate and compassionate.

Stiller obviously tells both of these stories in an effort to illustrate something about his personality. Near the beginning of the novel, he tells what essentially is a "thriller." The Stiller who rescues Florence

from the fire and then murders her husband in order to escape with her is the kind of decisive, successful person that the real Stiller longs to be. He claims that the story is true, but really would not dare to tell it to anyone other than the naive Knobel. It is true only in so far as it represents his dream, the type of man that he longs to be.

The second, main version of the Florence story is much more realistic and much more in keeping with the personality of the Stiller whom the reader of his prison diary has come to know. He not only claims, but swears that this is a true story and tells it in a manner which would make it plausible even to his sceptical defense attorney.

Another very significant way in which these two versions of the Florence story relate to the novel as a whole is in the figure of Florence herself. Although the two Florences differ, it is in a matter of degree rather than essence. Both Florence figures are directly antithetical to Julika. (This idea is substantiated in that Stiller tells his first story of Florence in order to describe "his type of woman," which Julika was not.) Their actions and responses are very unlike those of Julika.

In order to illustrate this more thoroughly, a third story must be considered. Inextricably linked

with the second Florence story is the story of Little Grey which Stiller tells in the first notebook, when his defense attorney asks about his house in Oakland.

Stiller lived in a little hut located in a Negro-Chinese section of Oakland. Since he had no money for rent, Stiller's obligation was to feed the cat, Little Grey. He could not stand cats and an immediate struggle for endurance began between him and Little Grey.

Stiller always fed Little Grey, but he put her food outside instead of in the kitchen where she was accustomed to eating. He continually threw her out, but unless he closed the door and all of the windows, she would sneak back into the house and rub against his legs. If he closed the windows, Little Grey always sprang onto the window sill and glowered and hissed at him through the glass.

One night when Stiller could not sleep for the cat's howling, he let Little Grey in and put her in the refrigerator. He still couldn't sleep, so he finally let her out again and fixed her some warm milk which she was too sick to drink. Little Grey disappeared for eleven days and nights and finally reappeared with a wound on her face and a seemingly accusing look. For a week, Stiller fed her in the kitchen, until he dreamed about her one night. He then threw her out again and

the whole struggle began anew.

In his sixth notebook Stiller makes two additional references to Little Grey: one, in the middle of his description of his life in the U.S.A.; the other, four pages from the end of his diary. The first illustrates how in the U.S. he was never alone, never free.

Und war es nicht meine grazile Balletteuse, so war es doch 'Little Grey,' dieses grazile Biest von einer Katze, das immerfort auf meinen Fenstersims hüpfte und mir doch nichts zu sagen hatte (401).

The cat had a countenance like a victress. Even though he threw Little Grey out, Stiller was still not alone, as he expected her to reappear on the window sill at any moment. After telling how he was never alone in Oakland, Stiller asks: "Bin ich es denn jetzt? Ich denke an Frau Julika Stiller-Tschudy in Paris" (402).

Much later, at the end of his sixth notebook, Stiller records his thoughts about how impossible it is to express the meaning of things. The meaning sometimes comes in dreams, and he records one such dream:

Im Augenblick, da ich 'Little Grey' erwürge, weiss ich, dass es gar nicht die Katze ist, sondern Julika, die lacht, ein Leichen, wie ich es nie an ihr gekannt habe, Julika überhaupt ganz anders, lustig, ich würge die Katze mit aller Kraft, Julika höhnt mich vor einem Publikum, das ich nirgends sehe, die Katze wehrt sich nicht, aber springt nachher wieder auf den Fenstersims, leckt sich, Julika gar nie meine Frau gewesen, alles nur Einbildung von mir (450-451).

These two references leave little doubt that Little Grey is symbolic of Julika. The cat, like Julika, is strangely independent of and yet, at the same time, dependent upon Stiller. Stiller dutifully cares for the cat for quite some time until he can no longer endure the relationship. Although he attempts to get rid of the cat, he can never free himself from feelings of guilt and failure. These are the exact same feelings that he has and has always had about his wife, Julika, whom he deserted six years before.

Interestingly enough, it is Florence (in the second version of the story) who, although she is not at all like Julika, takes pity on Little Grey and is concerned. When Little Grey was hurt, Florence returned her to Stiller:

'And you don't feel any pity for her?' sagte sie, 'you are cruel, you don't love her!' . . . 'You should love her!' . . . 'Of course, you should!' (229)

Quite simply, then, Florence maintains that Stiller should love the cat for what she is, and, thus offers the solution, not only for the Stiller-Little Grey dilemma, but also for saving Stiller's relationship with Julika. Love and its accompanying compassion and kindness to other people are necessary for personal satisfaction and peace.

By clearly revealing a possible solution to one of Stiller's major problems, as well as by illustrating

some of his personality traits and actions, the second story about Florence serves to underscore the function of the small stories in the novel. The Little Gray story is highly symbolic; the first Florence story is an exaggerated projection of Stiller's longings. Both contribute depth and dimension to the main Florence story, which, in turn, provides a valuable insight into the theme of the entire narrative. These three stories, then, illustrate, singly, different types of stories; and, as a group, illustrate the interdependence of events, motifs and persons, so necessary for the elucidation of the novel as a whole.

CHAPTER V

THE ROLF STORY

Throughout his notebooks, Stiller records many stories, stories which he has told or plans to tell his acquaintances in order that they may more clearly understand his own feelings and actions. Only once does Stiller record that someone has told him a story.

This occurs at the end of his third notebook when Stiller notes that he was visited by Rolf, his friend who is also the prosecuting attorney. What began as a rather generalized discussion of the generosity of deserted husbands led to Rolf's giving an example from his own experience. Rolf spent the greater part of the afternoon telling his story. As Stiller can not seem to get Rolf's story out of his mind, he records it in the first twenty-three pages of his fourth notebook.

After having been informed by his wife Sibylle that she was having a serious affair, Rolf fled. He boarded the last evening train to Italy, indifferent as to his destination but, at the same time, somewhat disturbed by the lack of a definite goal. After indulging in immature thoughts of revenge, Rolf made great efforts to sleep,

hoping that when he awakened all would turn out to have been a bad dream.

Rolf's purposelessness became more pronounced when the train arrived in Genoa the next morning. Not knowing exactly where to go or what to do, he wandered through the streets muttering to himself as he recalled his dialog of the previous evening with Sibylle. Unable to dissuade a persistent gondolier, Rolf found himself taking a boat tour of the city. When the tour was finally ended, he started for a restaurant.

He was detained, however, by an American sailor who was trying to locate a certain alley. Rolf could not help him but the sailor kept following him, trying to explain that his ship was about ready to sail and that he first had to dispose of a package of suit material which he had brought as a present for a former Italian comrade. Thinking to rid himself of the sailor, Rolf motioned to a passerby who perhaps knew where the alley was located or who might even be interested in purchasing the material.

This only complicated matters. As the American could not speak Italian, and the Italian did not understand English, Rolf was forced to interpret. Twice he started away, but each time was restrained by the frantic American. The Italian was not very interested in the material, but he finally motioned that they should follow

him and led the way through various alleys to a secluded spot where he could examine the goods.

The material proved to be, at the most, fifty percent wool, and was a hideous flesh color. 30,000 lire was the price which they finally settled on. The Italian, however, had only 10,000 lire with him and would have to go to his home to get the rest. Since the sailor could not wait without missing his ship, there was no alternative but for Rolf to put up the other 20,000.

As if he sensed Rolf's distrust, the Italian very politely insisted that Rolf carry the package until he got the 20,000 lire. Once again the Italian led the way through the dismal alleys. He was strangely silent, as if he had been offended, and spoke only when he finally stopped in front of a shabby Renaissance portal. Saying that this was his house and that Rolf should wait here, the Italian disappeared through the doorway.

Rolf had no idea of where they were, but decided that maybe it wasn't a swindle after all. Once again thinking of Sibylle, Rolf sat down to wait and fell asleep, using the package as a pillow. When Rolf awoke, it was almost four o'clock and there was no sign of the Italian. On closer inspection the portal proved to lead only into the next alley and not to be a house entrance at all.

Actually Rolf was rather glad not to see the handsome young fellow again because he could envision Sibylle in the arms of such a man. The most embarrassing rebuff was not so much the loss of the 20,000 lire but the fact that he had failed to be the imposing man that he had always fancied himself to be towards his wife. The sudden reduction in his funds, however, forced Rolf to go to a cheap hotel, where he threw the package into the closet.

Rolf stayed four days in Genoa, and these four days proved to be one of the most ridiculous endeavors of his life. With his many logical theories about marriage, Rolf had never really considered the possibility that his own marriage could fail. During these four days, Rolf learned much about himself. He had never before suspected that he was so sentimental, so primitive, so narrow-minded and, in fact, unable to love a woman who did not idolize him. The most difficult of all was the realization that he wasn't nearly as mature and in control of his feelings as he had imagined. A telegram from his secretary (whom he had notified of his whereabouts) finally aroused him and he made ready to return.

As he needed money to pay his hotel bills, Rolf determined to sell the package of material. The material really was atrocious and Rolf's first several

attempts to sell it were futile. As he tried to decide what to do, Rolf realized that at this point his self-confidence was even shabbier than the package. He devised a long, elaborate story about why he had to sell the goods and set out to find a second-hand dealer in a poor section of town. Rolf's story, however, was negated by his own clothing. The dealer offered to buy his ring and shoes, but would only give Rolf 900 lire for the package of material. Rolf needed at least 1,000 lire for the sake of his self-confidence.

With only forty minutes left before his train departed, Rolf determined to give the package away. He discovered that it was hard to find the proper recipient for something which he himself could not stand and would never have worn. He briefly considered throwing the package in an alley, but decided that would be capitulation. The real problem was not the money for the hotel bill (he could always send that later), but rather the question of getting rid of the package.

He tried to lose it by dropping it while crossing a street in the midst of a crowd of people. He had hardly reached the other side of the street when a young woman tugged at his sleeve and courteously returned it. His ultimate capitulation was postponed until just before the train left, and, even as Rolf sat in the train thinking of Sibylle and what attitude he should assume toward

her when he returned, he halfway expected someone to pull on his sleeve and return the package.

Stiller concludes by saying that Rolf had told the story much more vividly than he could record it. Only when Stiller had asked what happened to the material, did Rolf finally admit to throwing it into a toilet at the train station in Genoa and confessed that he had afterwards dreamed about the package for years.

Rolf's story, unlike the other distinct stories recorded in Stiller's notebook, is a rather loosely constructed narrative. His account of his trip to, and experience in, Genoa is presented chronologically with numerous flashbacks of scenes and conversations with Sibylle. These flashbacks do indeed add additional depth and help explain Rolf's actions and feelings, but at the same time they greatly retard the action.

Obviously Rolf feels compelled to insert these explanations in order to emphasize the importance of his experience. Stiller comments that Rolf

sieht sich aber mehr und mehr gezwungen, präzise zu werden, um allerlei Missverständnisse zu bannen, und sich an das konkrete Beispiel aus eigener Erfahrung zu halten (237).

Since Rolf is the one who initiates the entire conversation about the generous attitude that deceived husbands should "properly" assume and because he pursues the topic for an

entire afternoon, it must be a subject very important to him. Although he and Sibylle have long reconciled their differences and are enjoying a happy, harmonious marriage, Rolf is still occupied with his own problem to a certain extent. He seems concerned that he had not acted in the most generous and suave manner.

Stiller, for the first time placed in the role of the listener, is somewhat nonplussed by Rolf's openness. He realizes that there are many stories which are very similar to Rolf's and, in spite of his great personal interest in the topic, it is chiefly for this reason that Rolf tells his story. Rolf wants to make Stiller realize that he is not unique, that many others are confronted with similar problems, situations, and experiences. Rolf's success is evident, for Stiller himself says,

Seine kleine Geschichte mit dem fleischfarbenen Kleiderstoff in Genua, die mein Freund und Staatsanwalt gestern erzählt hat, will mir nicht aus dem Kopf" (238).

The fact that Stiller records Rolf's story in toto further proves that he deems it important.

Rolf's sudden trip to Genoa is a reaction to Sibylle's confronting him with the simple truth, i.e., that she is assuming for herself the freedom that Rolf had long advocated was necessary within the framework of marriage. His response is to flee this reality,

which he ardently wishes were only a bad dream. Neither Sibylle nor her lover causes him to flee. His flight is mostly from himself, from his inability to be magnanimous or even to feign indifference. However, this very flight ultimately brings Rolf to a closer and more realistic look at himself. Stiller reports:

Das [The four days in Genoa] war wohl (so meint mein Staatsanwalt) die lächerlichste Strapaze seines Lebens, nicht die nutzloseste. . . . Die Strapaze war die Einsicht, das unfreiwillige Eingeständnis, daß er sich über das Niveau seiner Gefühle bisher doch sehr getäuscht hatte, über seine Reife. (248-249)

By far the most critical of Rolf's experiences in Genoa is the episode with the package of material. His chance encounter with the American sailor and the ensuing involvement with the package become symbolic of Rolf's emotional dilemma.

Against his will, Rolf becomes the vital third party in an illegal transaction. His limited knowledge of English and Italian make him the interpreter or essential middleman. His reluctance to appear petty forces him to put up the 20,000 lire. His naivete, as well as preoccupation with his own problems, causes him to sit by the port and wait for the Italian to return with the 20,000 lire.

Naturally Rolf is unhappy about the loss of 20,000 lire and could not care less about the package of material

which he now possesses. He finds the whole incident an embarrassing blow to his ego.

Es war eine Schlappe, und das gerade jetzt, wo er seiner Gattin wegen der imposante Mann hätte sein wollen, war schwer, nicht zu vergleichen mit dem Verlust von zwanzigtausend Lire, nicht wiedergutsumsehen. (245).

Rolf's ego involvement with the package becomes more pronounced when he tries to dispose of it before returning to Zürich. He actually does need the money in order to pay his hotel bill, but when his attempts to sell the package of material fail, Rolf is not merely concerned with his bill.

Es ging jetzt (so sagt er) schon nicht mehr um die Lire, sondern um sein nacktes Selbstvertrauen, das er als ein immer lotterigeres Paket abermals unter den Arm nahm. (252)

The package increases in importance as Rolf finds it impossible even to give it away. He feels that to throw it away would be capitulation and, after his attempt to lose it is foiled, he postpones his final capitulation until the very last moment before his train departs. Rolf refers to the package as an "Angsttraum-Paket" (255) and confesses to Stiller that it had haunted his dreams for many years.

The significance that this holds for Rolf is clearly expressed. The inferior flesh-colored material is symbolic

of Rolf's feelings which have suddenly been exposed as being shoddy and cheap. Rolf is, however, extremely reluctant to recognize them as such and to discard them.

Two subsequent references to the package of material appear in Stiller's notebook. The first records that Rolf once again dreamed of the shoddy package. The second reference is near the beginning of his seventh diary, when Stiller records a conversation that he and Rolf have had. It is in this conversation that Rolf's package is clearly related to Stiller.

Stiller records this conversation under the heading "Gespräch mit dem Staatsanwalt, meinem Freund, über Stiller" (380). On this occasion Rolf and Stiller are discussing Stiller, but the conversation can be examined as a natural extension of Rolf's earlier recorded story. The direct link is the package metaphor, when Rolf says: "Die meisten von uns haben ein Paket mit fleischfarbenem Stoff, nämlich Gefühle, die sie von ihrem intellektuellen Niveau aus nicht wahrhaben wollen" (380).

If Rolf had previously shared the Italian experience with Stiller in order to show Stiller that his own experiences and stories were not unique, Rolf now follows up by telling Stiller that his problems also are not unique and can, even must be, overcome.

Rolf first speaks of the folly of making too exorbitant demands of oneself. Man is often the victim of

a discrepancy between his intellectual and emotional niveaus. The intellect tries to ignore and discredit the emotions and therefore leads to two possibilities: first, to the death of all feeling and sensitivity; second, to the disguise of true feelings which, in turn, leads to self-deception.

A byproduct of such personal driving is guilt and Rolf pinpoints an example of such guilt in Stiller. "Zur Selbstüberforderung, gehört unweigerlich eine falsche Art von schlechtem Gewissen. Stiller nahm es sich übel, kein Spanienkämpfer zu sein" (381).

He also warns that such self-deception also gives rise to misinterpretations. "Wir sehen wohl unsere Niederlage, aber begreifen sie nicht als Signale, als Konsequenzen eines verkehrten Strebens, eines Strebens weg von unserem Selbst" (381).

Rolf continues to say that Stiller is not the only one who makes such demands of himself. The crux of the whole matter is not merely self-recognition, but self-acceptance. "Viele erkennen sich selbst, nur wenige kommen dazu, sich selbst auch anzunehmen" (382).

He describes two distinct phases or degrees of overcoming such self-deception. First comes the self-knowledge or recognition. "Selbsterkenntnis als lebenslängliche Melancholie, als geistreicher Umgang mit unserer früheren Resignation ist sehr häufig" (382). He

warns Stiller that this is not enough. People at this first level, "sind aus einer falschen Rolle ausgetreten, und das ist schon etwas, gewiss, aber es führt sie noch nicht ins Leben zurück" (382). Obviously he considers this the stage which Stiller has reached. Stiller is denying his past, but is making no effort to construct his future.

As a final encouragement and stimulus, Rolf reminds Stiller, "Es braucht die höchste Lebenskraft, um sich selbst anzunehmen" (382) and intimates that the belief in an absolute reality (i.e., God) is prerequisite to total self-acceptance and its accompanying freedom.

It can be concluded, then, that Rolf's story of his experience in Italy has definite significance for Stiller. First of all it necessitates a reversal of roles and places Stiller in the position of the listener. In hearing and thinking about Rolf's experience with the package of flesh-colored material, Stiller comes to realize that he is not unique. Rolf's story sheds considerable light on Stiller's position, and, in the later reference, Rolf clearly spells out what Stiller must do. Just as Florence had recommended "love" as the solution to Stiller's problem, Rolf recommends "self-acceptance."

CONCLUSION

As has been previously stated, Stiller contains many fragments representing various types of prose form. Skillfully arranged by Frisch, they serve to reflect various aspects of Stiller's personality and to reveal much about his actions. Some function as parables, some are aphoristic, some are highly descriptive.

The five stories discussed in this paper are all much more thoroughly developed than the other fragments. They contain highly developed motifs which appear elsewhere in the book. Often symbolic, they serve to define and extend the main narrative, thus becoming vital and integral parts of the whole.

Each of the stories emphasizes particular aspects of Stiller's position or problem. The Isidor story is a protest against constant questioning and endless repetition and is intended as a warning to Julika. Rip van Winkle shares Stiller's problem of being misunderstood. Both Rip and Stiller have a communication problem and attempt to convey their experiences (Erfahrungen) by telling stories. Rip's final resignation to being misunderstood foreshadows Stiller's ultimate compromise, e.g., the life which he leads as described in the last

part of the novel.

The cave story illustrates the change which Stiller has undergone, the change which causes Stiller to deny his identity and which he so desperately tries to explain. It represents the death of Stiller's former self, which occurred before the beginning of the book.

The Florence story points out Stiller's inability to be the type of man that he desires to be and suggests that he needs to love in order to accept and relate to other people. The Rolf story illustrates that one must not only recognize his feelings but also accept them for what they are. Self-acceptance is essential for survival, for happiness.

The five stories with their individual emphases and messages fall into two groups according to form and content. The Isidor story is a short story; Rip van Winkle, a Märchen; and the cave story, a Novelle. These three are most tightly constructed and represent three distinct subgenres. The stories of Florence and Rolf might be considered episodic narratives, and differ from the other stories by virtue of the commentaries interjected by Stiller and Rolf in order to elaborate and explain their significance.

The same grouping is revealed by the content of the stories. The Isidor, Rip van Winkle, and cave stories

illustrate Stiller's Erfahrungen. The Florence and Rolf stories offer possible solutions for Stiller. Florence and Rolf both serve as contrasting characters--Florence to Julika and Rolf to Stiller--and their respective successful relationships to Joe and Sibylle contrast to, but suggest hope for, Stiller's relationship with Julika.

Although Stiller realizes and notes in his diaries that his stories are being misunderstood, he continues to tell them for lack of a better mode of expression. This is a superb illustration of Frisch's theory that Geschichten are man's only means of explaining his Erfahrungen or inner experiences which are frequently the impetus to his actions.

Frisch's comments about Geschichten are certainly applicable to Stiller.

Man kann die Wahrheit nicht erzählen. Die Wahrheit ist keine Geschichte. Alle Geschichten sind erfunden, Spiele der Einbildung, Bilder, sie sind wirklich nur als Bilder, als Spiegelungen. Jeder Mensch, auch wenn er kein Schriftsteller ist, erfindet seine Geschichte. Anders bekommen wir unser Erlebnismuster, unsere Erfahrung, nicht zu Gesicht.¹

In his very first notebook, Stiller records that, when he tries to explain or tell about his life, people only

¹ Ausgewählte Prosa, p. 8.

respond with "Hirngespinnste!" When he tries to tell the real story (truth which cannot be substantiated by photos or concrete proof) he is interrupted or ignored. He ruefully comments: "Man kann alles erzählen, nur nicht sein wirkliches Leben" (74).

Stiller has, however, no other recourse. Once again Frisch's explanation is:

Die Erfahrung dichtet. Wenn Menschen mehr Erfahrung haben als Vorkommnisse, die als Ursache anzugeben wären, bleibt ihnen nichts anderes übrig als ehrlich zu sein: sie fabulieren. Wohin sonst sollen sie mit ihrer Erfahrung? Sie entwerfen, sie erfinden, was ihre Erfahrung lesbar macht. Die Erfahrung ist nicht ein Schluss, sondern eine Eröffnung; ihr Bezirk ist die Zukunft.²

When seen in conjunction with Frisch's thoughts on Geschichten Stiller's story-telling takes on its real significance. The stories themselves work together to afford the reader a composite portrait of Anatol Ludwig Stiller as he struggles to free himself from both real and self-imposed imprisonment.

²Ausgewählte Prosa, pp. 9-10.

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